WALES GOLF

EVERYONE'S GAME, ANYWHERE

Guidance for Playing Golf in Wales and UK under COVID-19 Restrictions

Version 19

1/04/2021

BACK2GOLF

Updated 26/03/2021

Please ensure this updated document is shared with your Club Manager, Club Coronavirus Officer, Activity Organisers, Junior Organiser, PGA professional, Competition Secretary, Chair of House, Bar and Catering Manager, Volunteer Coaches etc.

So clubs can be prepared for all eventualities, we have also updated our planning document (**A Guide to Restrictions for Golf Clubs in Wales Version 3)** with information that is currently available. We will continue to update clubs as further information becomes available. Click here for the most recent version.

There is a major responsibility for golf clubs and golfers to ensure that our sport is conducted safely and responsibly. Full adherence to the provisions of these regulations is essential for the safety of all and will ensure Golf can be continue to be played.

It should be noted that the Welsh Government continue to monitor the situation closely. Wales Golf as a National Governing Body is accountable to ensure the game remains safe. We have a responsibility to contact clubs that are seen to be operating outside government and industry guidelines. Any breaches will be reported to the relevant authority, and the club could face closure and/or suspension.

Our updated golfer info-graphic accessed here

Update 1st April 2021

The Welsh Government has set out a series of measures that will hopefully take Wales fully into Alert Level 3 by 17th May.

From Monday 12th April, Travel into and out of Wales from the rest of the United Kingdom will also be allowed. This will allow Golfers who live in England or Wales to play at their home clubs again if they are across the border. Non-essential retail and close contact services will also be allowed to reopen on 12th April. In the interim, professional shops should continue to operate a click and collect service.

As always remain in frequent communication with Welsh Government and we are trying to gain clarification as to when more than 2 households will be permitted to exercise together outdoors. When this regulation is relaxed it will of course mean that 4 ball golf will be allowed without any restriction as to their make-up.

The next Welsh Government formal review will take place on the 22nd of April. For further information on potential easing of restrictions please read the Welsh Government Statement here.

Please note: The Welsh Government have stressed that all given dates are provisional and subject to the public health guidance issued at the time.

Full Welsh Government update here.

Regulations and Guidelines

Below are some guidelines to ensure we keep our golfers, volunteers and staff safe and that your club remains compliant with Welsh Government, Industry and Wales Golf regulations and guidelines.

Please ensure you regularly check https://gov.wales/ for updates.

Coronavirus Officer

The Welsh Government Sports Guidance advises clubs to appoint a Coronavirus Officer. This role is strategic in the phased return to sport activities. It is not a role to be feared, though; it is in no way a medical or healthcare position. The Coronavirus Officer will simply manage and ensure that the required processes and information are put in place and monitor compliance with the guidance and legal requirements.

- An existing member of the organisation must be appointed as a Coronavirus officer
- They will be responsible for oversight of the Coronavirus risk assessments
- They will be responsible for ensuring the necessary level of risk assessment and mitigations are in place
- They will be responsible for ensuring that the organisation can adhere to its guidance responsibilities within local constraints.
- Club Coronavirus Officers should liaise with their NGB equivalents for reassurance and guidance.
- There is nothing in this role that will in any way 'medical' or require specialist knowledge of the virus or health protection.
- The role will be no more onerous than being a safeguarding officer – probably less so.

Risk Assessment linked to COVID-19

It is a requirement that Golf clubs conduct a COVID-19 risk assessment to plan, prepare, and mitigate risk linked to COVID-19. It also must be adapted to meet the needs of the club and aligned and amended according to the correct Government advice and restrictions. A Wales Golf template risk assessment has been developed to support clubs in implementing the safest possible procedures and is available by contacting the Wales Golf Development team.

PPE should also be used where applicable. Wales Golf can also put clubs in contact with several retailers who can provide this.

Taking bookings

Booking in advance, online or over the phone must take place. Encourage contactless or card payment to avoid handling cash.

Remember that some people do not have internet access. You should make provision for them to be able to make bookings/enquiries offline.

On enquiry

- Take the participant's or parent/ guardian's name, contact telephone number and email and readout/ send/ display on online booking system your self-assessment statement (example below).

When a booking has been taken, all the necessary information should be communicated, including:

- Booking details (and consent form with participants/parents/ guardians / spectators correct contact details if applicable)
- Session/ reservation information
- What the club has put in place to ensure participants remain safe
- Rules including those on safe arrival and departure
- Self-assessment and declaration form/ statement

Self- assessment and declaration form/ Statement – this can be read out or put on a notice board which should include a part about localised lockdowns/ travel restrictions (where applicable). Here is an example:

> *"I have NOT HAD in the last 10 days any of the following Covid-19 symptoms: A continuous high temperature; A loss of taste or smell; A new continuous cough. I also confirm that I have not to the best of my knowledge, had contact with anyone else who has had these symptoms or tested positive for Covid-19.*
>
> *"I also confirm that I nor any other person in my household or extended household have NOT been told to self-isolate and are not currently subject to Covid-19 quarantine after travel or illness. I also confirm that I have not travelled into or away from an area that is currently subject to any form of local coronavirus restriction or lockdown."*

The participant must agree to the statement (verbally is fine) to be able to book and also play golf on the day. You may use a checkbox on a web form to indicate the participant has read and can agree to the statement. In the case of a minor, the guardian will be required to indicate the truth of the statement on the child's behalf.

Local restrictions and lockdowns (if applicable) - Generally, the usual residence of someone is determined by their entry on the register of electors at their local council. Clubs and organisations must not allow temporary changes of address as a way of being allowed to participate.

Test, Trace, Protect (TTP)

Clubs should implement an appropriate and thorough record-keeping system. This will support the Welsh Government's Test, Trace, Protect strategy in terms of staff on duty at the club and individuals using the facilities to ensure they can be traced, contacted, advised to self-isolate and tested accordingly for Coronavirus by TTP. This is in the event of them having used the facilities or been working at the venue, at the same time as an individual, or staff member, who has since tested positive for Coronavirus.

NHS COVID-19 App - The NHS COVID-19 app is an important part of the Test Trace Protect programme to control the spread of Covid-19. The app will be used, alongside traditional contact tracing, to notify users if they come into contact with someone who later tests positive for Coronavirus.

The app allows people to report symptoms, order a coronavirus test, check in to venues by scanning a QR code, and it helps the NHS trace/ notify individuals that may have Coronavirus.

Find out more about the NHS COVID-19 app here

NHS COVID-19 App advice for business & creating your own QR code here

Contact Information Required - The following details should be taken:

Staff

- Names of staff who work at the premises.
- A contact telephone number for each member of staff.
- The dates and times that the staff are at work.

Customers, participants and visitors

- The names of customers or visitors, or if it is a group of people, the name of one member of the group – the 'lead member'.
- A contact telephone number for each customer or visitor, or if this is a group from the same household, the lead member of that group.
- Date of visit and arrival and departure times.

Welsh Government Test, Trace and Protect information, which can be used to show your customers, if required, can be found here.

For further information, visit:

https://gov.wales/test-trace-protect-process-summary-html

https://gov.wales/test-trace-protect-your-questions

Clubhouse Management

Clubhouse facilities should be **CLOSED** to non-staff members under THIS LEVEL. However, toilets and washrooms are permitted, therefore access will be required.

Under lower levels, these guidelines will need to be kept under constant review as Welsh Government and public health advice may change at short notice. It may be necessary to agree a periodic / weekly review meeting with club staff.

- The management and administration of the club will in many ways remain focused on its core objectives. However, certain procedures and policies will need to be introduced or amended to ensure the welfare of the staff, golfers and those outside personnel who will visit the club in their normal working day i.e., delivery, maintenance and even emergency services personnel.
- Whilst the clubhouse may remain **closed** at certain COVID-19 alert levels, there will be a need for the management of the club to be maintained. At this time, offices and administration areas should not be available for golfers or visitors to frequent or visit. All members and visitors will need to be made aware of the alternative communication channels that are available to them.
- Those responsible for overseeing the running of the club, owners, directors and committee members, need to agree and adhere to a cohesive policy and set of procedures that are delivered on a consistent basis.
- The club administration areas and offices will need to be sufficiently arranged to ensure that either lone working (split shifts) or adequate social distancing is adhered to. Should there be need to provide a reception facility, then adequate protective screening will need to be deployed.
- Hand sanitisers and only disposable hand towels should be used for staff toilet facilities - regular cleaning procedures will be required for these areas.
- In the instance of maintenance personnel being involved in clubhouse activities, they should be suitably attired with protective clothing and report in and out of the facility.
- Administer the arrangements for playing golf as outlined above.
- In the event of a club offering a takeaway service enforce social distancing rules and ensure staff wear face coverings and that food/ drink is consumed **off the premises only** at this level
- All drinks or snacks are served in either plastic or paper containers.
- Ensure all safety measures are shared with all employees and that their health and wellbeing is the number one priority, encourage them to share any concerns and empower them to request that golfers adhere to social distancing measures and report any issues to managers.

Ventilation

Ensure, where possible, that windows and doors to the exterior on the opposite side of a building are opened to create airflow.

Toilet and Washroom facilities

The club must ensure toilets are regularly **cleaned** (within the UK Government's **cleaning guidance**) and **well managed** to minimise the risk of the transmission of the virus.

- A full risk assessment should be carried out, setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets to ensure they are kept clean and social distancing is achieved as much as possible.
- Toilet capacity should be managed via entry and exit and to allow for the 2m social distancing to be maintained. Consider a one in one out system and 2-metre queueing point outside the building.
- More frequent rubbish collection.
- Replacing hand dryers with paper towels in handwashing facilities.

When accessing and leaving facilities, people should wipe down areas of contact, wash their hands thoroughly, use paper towels where possible and avoid touching any surfaces in transit.

Clubs should also regularly clean touch-point areas and surfaces in line with their club COVID-19 risk assessment.

When in enclosed public places, people are still required to wear face masks FAQ: Face coverings here

Clubs can also contact their **local Environment Health and Safety Authority** for additional advice and guidance regarding **opening toilet facilities**. It is also recommended that clubs **check** everything with **their insurance companies**.

Changing and Locker Rooms

Changing and locker rooms are **NOT PERMITTED** TO OPEN AT THIS LEVEL. Clubs should operate a booking system to ensure members can retrieve their equipment safely. When these are permitted to open, Risk assessments must be conducted to ensure these can be re-opened safely.

Click here for guidance around the re-opening of changing room facilities

Bars and Restaurants

Subject to the Welsh Government review and the public health conditions on the 22nd April. Bar and Restaurants may be able to open from the 26th of April.

In the meantime, if running a takeaway service, Wales Golf suggests you contact your Local Authority Licencing Officer to ensure that you are acting within the Welsh Government Guidelines and the Golf Clubs existing Licence. Clarification can also be sought with the Local Authority Officer as to the definition of Off-the-premises in relation to your specific club and Licence.

- If offering a takeaway service, enforce social distancing rules and ensure staff wear face coverings.
- All drinks or snacks to be served in either plastic or paper containers
- All drinks or snacks to be consumed off-premises at this level
- Welsh hospitality guidance can be found **here**

Further industry guidance here

Coaching, PGA Services and Driving Ranges

OUTDOOR coaching can resume with up to six people from two households inclusive of the coach.

UPDATE: Subject to the Welsh Government review and public health situation on the 22nd April, Organised outdoor activities for adults may be able to re-start from Monday 3rd May.

'Organised outdoor activities' for adults (above this number) and 'organised indoor activities' **CAN NOT** take place during THIS LEVEL. When this can happen, the club and coach must adopted of a range of procedures under 'organised sport' to ensure the activity is 'organised' (available on request and will be published in the next club guidance document).

Organised outdoor activities and sports for children and under-18s (by the 31st August 2021) can now take place. There is no limit on the number of children and young children that can attend, but organisers should be mindful of the space available.

Our full guidance for organised outdoor junior activities can be found here.

Welsh Government Organised outdoor activities for children FAQ can be found here

The booking guidance above and TTP is also applicable to golf lessons/ coaching.

PGA professionals should complete a comprehensive risk assessment and refer to the coaching guidelines on the PGA COVID-19 resource hub https://www.pga.info/covid-19-resource-hub/

For additional guidance, see our Wales Golf coaching/group session template risk assessment available from your Development Officer.

Coaches should adhere to the following guidelines to ensure the safety of both customers and professional staff during this or lower levels:

Coaching area:

- Creating a 2-metre exclusion zone around the participant that no one enters. For multiple users in group sessions, set out clear hitting areas to allow for social distancing along with safe areas 2-3 meters back, ensure social distancing is maintained at all times.
- Should bays not be separated by partitions or walls, close every other bay to allow for social distancing.
- Provide sanitising wipes for people to use as required.
- Clean the ball dispenser and any surfaces frequently.
- Coach on the side of the range/ practice area that fewest people have to walk past.
- Ask people to use their own equipment (where possible).
- If equipment is loaned, it should be thoroughly sanitised before and after use.

- Wash practice balls between uses.

Coaching:

- Where possible, conduct coaching and playing lessons outdoors rather than indoors (INDOOR ONLY AN OPTION WHEN AT LOWER RESTRICTION LEVELS).
- Keep group sessions to a minimum (where possible) and no more than the Welsh Government regulations (or more than capacity allows at lower levels)
- Wash hands with soap and water before and after the session.
- Provide sanitising wipes for the coach and golfers.
- Offer short game coaching sessions that allow the golfers to use their own golf balls. Therefore they are not sharing equipment that other people have touched.
- Take flags out of the holes in practice areas.

If your club is interested in starting a **New2Golf scheme**, please contact your Wales Golf development officer, who can talk you through the new scheme requirements.

PGA Professional Services

PGA Professional shop and retail facilities **can reopen from Monday 12th April**. In the interim, Click and collect services should still operate.

Professional shop will require the adoption of a range of procedures including but not limited to:

- There should be clear external signage to inform golfers a maximum of 2 golfers will be allowed in the shop at any one time (this may need to be 1 golfer at a time for small shops).
- For larger shops, agreed numbers of customers may be permitted to enter but this must be in line with social distancing recommendations.
- Larger shops may also wish to suggest a route to be taken around the shop by use of arrows on the floor
- Staff shift patterns should be amended to take account of government advice, ideally one person working at a time - this may result in a lower staffing level in the shop than usual and a more basic service may be offered on initial opening.
- Staff in the shop must conform to UK Government advice on social distancing - ideally one person at a time working in the shop, but if this is not possible, then a 2-metre distance should be kept.
- Shop staff should wash hands regularly and wear a face covering as required.
- Ventilation should be maximised.
- Ideally one member of staff would use the till during a particular shift - if multiple people are operating the same till then, hands should be washed / sanitised after each transaction.
- There should be a clearly defined queuing area outside the shop where golfers must adhere to social distancing of a minimum of at least 2 metres.
- Hand sanitiser should be positioned at the entrance to the shop, and all customers should be asked to sanitise before entering.
- The shop door should remain open to avoid contact with handles by golfers and to easily view number of customers in the shop.
- In store signage should direct customers to the till area and then back out of the shop.
- Transactions should be by customer account or card only.
- Sanitiser wipes should be provided for use before and after each transaction.

- Rental trolleys will not be available unless handles are able to be removed and sanitised between each use.
- Buggy use should be on basis of one person only hire, with strict sanitisation between hires.
- Where possible, a clear screen should be employed to protect shop staff.
- Ideally, the shop should be merchandised with essential items positioned close to the till area, especially given possible lower levels of staffing.
- Other transactions requiring advice will be located in an area where shop staff can offer advice whilst also observing safe social distancing of 2 metres.

Club fitting sessions:

Club fitting sessions are permitted during THIS LEVEL, but when this service returns, it should be carried out outdoors and should adhere to the following guidance to ensure safety of both customers and professional staff:

- This service should only be offered by prior booking.
- Hand sanitiser should be positioned at the entrance to the club fitting area and all customers and fitters will be required to sanitise before entering.
- Customer advice signage should be placed prominently when entering the fitting room or zone to notify the measures and procedures in place.
- A strict 2-metre social distance must be adhered to between the fitter and the customer.
- All golf fitting components must be sanitised after every use with conforming alcohol sanitising wipes before being returned to its storage location.
- Particular attention must be given to the sanitising of the club grip and the passing of component clubs between fitter and customer.
- Golf balls used in the club fitting must also be kept clean to avoid cross-infection between customer and fitter.

Driving ranges

OUTDOOR Driving Ranges **MAY** be able to re-open as long as social distancing, hygiene measures and government guidance is maintained. Facilities must check with their Local Authority prior to opening. Facilities **must** conduct a full risk assessment.

Safe use procedures include but are not limited to:

- Should bays not be separated by partitions or walls, close every other bay to allow for social distancing.
- Make sure the ball washer has soap in the machine.
- Provide sanitising wipes for people to use as required.
- Clean the ball dispenser surfaces frequently.
- Coach on the side of the range that fewest people have to walk past.
- People should use their own equipment.

Click here to view the Welsh Government 'Keep Wales Safe in Retail' guidelines.
Click here for further considerations for re-opening Driving Ranges.

Golf Course Preparation

Golf clubs have been permitted to carry out essential course maintenance during lockdown periods and to enhanced standards at lower COVID-19 alert levels. At all times staff safety is paramount.

Measures relating to staff should include but not be limited to:

- Ensuring suitable disinfectant and hand sanitiser is provided in all communal areas.
- Staggering working hours and break times.
- Prohibiting use of communal areas.
- Ensuring there is a robust lone working policy.
- Encouraging staff to bring their own food and drink for breaks that should be stored safely and separately.
- Appointing a senior member of staff to be responsible for COVID-19 protocols and disinfecting/sanitising all surfaces that are touched, for example, door handles and fuel pumps. The same member of staff should be responsible for opening and closing doors to the maintenance facility.
- Ensuring team meetings, if they are necessary, are held outdoors.
- Utilising modern communication methods, for example, online systems or mobile phones for team communications rather than indoor briefings and job sheets.
- Ensuring there is a high focus on hygiene and physical distancing.
- Ensuring staff members work separately, not in pairs/groups where possible.
- Allocating individual machinery to one staff member only.
- Fully sanitising all machinery after use, focusing on all areas that the staff member has come into contact with.

Permitted Play

Golf will be able to be played with a maximum of four people from two households. No society golf bookings until further notice at this constitutes a gathering.

Facilities should implement a range of procedures to allow safe play to take place, including but not limited to:

- Play should be managed by the professional staff / starter and they should remind golfers of the guidance on social distancing and safe play.
- Updated guidance and advice for golfers should be posted on websites and on tee times booking pages.
- Tee time booking should be done online if at all possible.
- Consider increasing the time between tee times to allow for easier social distancing.
- Consider restricting the number of players in a group.
- Consider playing a reduced number of holes (e.g. 9 holes).
- Any payment should be taken online or by contactless methods.
- Clubhouses may have to remain shut at certain COVID-19 alert levels, so ask people to arrive shortly before their tee time (e.g., 10-15 minutes) and change their shoes in the car park.
- Consider the layout of the car park for easier social distancing.
- Consider access toilets that may require to be closed in lockdown conditions.

- Place visual reminders for social distancing at 1st tee and refresh messaging in round. Line marking 3m distanced trolley and bag spots at selected tee boxes.
- It may be necessary to employ marshals on the golf course to ensure that the social distancing directive is maintained between players.
- Require golfers to leave the flag in at all times and use a hole liner system that means that the ball doesn't drop and can be retrieved without touching the cup.
- Remove the bunker rakes and cover or close ball washers
- Golfers should be asked to leave the venue as soon as their game is completed.

Responding to prevailing COVID-19 alert levels, staff will need to regulate 'safe play' and communicate these to the golfers. Plans should be put in place to ensure that any practices required of golfers before, during and after the round, including communications of temporary provisions relating to the playing of the game, can be accessed in advance and reinforced when golfers arrive to play.

It may be appropriate to send these guidelines to golfers, place them on the online booking areas of a website and also place signage on the first tee as a reminder.

Golfers will be required to comply with the rules on social distancing throughout. Some temporary provisions in relation to the Rules of Golf will also be necessary to ensure safe play (see below).

While each club/facility will need to adapt its procedures to ensure compliance with Welsh Government restrictions, the following aspects of the golfer experience, divided into the five following categories, will need to be considered:

- **Course Set-Up**
- **Before the Round**
- **During the Round**
- **After the Round**
- **Rules of Golf Related Matters**

Course Set-Up

On-Course Items

- 4 markings should be placed adjacent to the tees 3 metres apart, highlighting appropriate social distancing.
- All rakes and ball-retrievers to be removed.
- Ball washers and drinking fountains to be covered up.
- Benches and bins to be removed, covered, or sign-posted in such a way that players don't touch them. Or conduct a risk assessment for their safe use.
- All other removable items to be removed, except that stakes defining areas of the course, can be treated as immovable obstructions.

Hole and Flagstick

- Flagsticks can be retained, but it is strongly recommended that a sign is put on the flagstick, stating that it is not to be touched.
- A method of inserting the hole liner to be used means that all of the ball does not fall below the surface of the putting green and can be easily retrieved by handling the ball only.

Practice Areas

- Practice areas, including practice nets, to be closed unless safe sanitising practices can be guaranteed.

Before the Round

Bookings

- Clubs/facilities to organise a system of booking and allocation of tee times that ensures the safety of staff and golfers.
- The maximum number of golfers in a group per tee time to be confirmed by the club/facility and must be in accordance with any government requirements.
- There should be a minimum of 10-minute intervals between tee times. If considering smaller intervals (no less than 8 minutes), a risk assessment should be conducted to identify if it is safe and that no hold ups are likely to occur on the course.

Arrival and Waiting to Play

- Limited essential access (for example, to use the toilets where applicable) may be allowed by the club/facility.
- Clubs/facilities to communicate in advance with golfers to advise on social distancing requirements that are being applied on arrival at the club/facility, for example, not leaving cars until a certain time before their tee time.
- Clubs/facilities to have procedures in place to ensure social distancing requirements in the area of the professional's shop or starter's building in advance of golfers teeing off.
- No trolleys, carts, or other items to be available for hire unless safe sanitising practices can be guaranteed.
- Clubs/facilities to have procedures in place for the practice putting green, for example giving priority of use to the player(s) in the next group due to tee off.

During the Round

Guidance and reminders should be provided by clubs/facilities to golfers is to ensure that they keep at least 2 metres apart during the round.

Teeing Areas

- Remind golfers to keep 2 metres apart at teeing areas due to the normal close proximity of golfers to one another when tee shots are being played.

General

- Remind golfers to stay more than 2 metres apart when walking to the ball, searching for a ball, and playing shots.
- Remind golfers not to touch stray balls.

Bunkers

- With no rakes allowed on the course, remind golfers to make their very best efforts to smooth the sand using their club and/or their feet.

Putting Green

- Remind golfers to keep 2 metres apart on the putting greens and not to touch the flagstick.

After the Round

- Remind golfers that social distancing is as important after a round as it is during the round, so when the round is over, they must either leave the course and the club/facility immediately or if food and drink is being served (within the Welsh Government Guidelines) it is recommended to limit the time to ensure social distancing and other Government regulations can be met.

Rules of Golf Related Matters

Until further notice, the following provisions are considered acceptable on a temporary basis:

Bunkers

- If golfers take due care when smoothing bunkers, there should be no need to provide a Local Rule for bunkers. But if the Committee feels that the enjoyment of the game is being significantly affected by there being no rakes, it may introduce preferred lies in bunkers and provide that a player may place a ball in the bunker within one club-length of the original spot and not nearer to the hole than that spot (or within 6 inches if submitting for competition or handicapping purposes).

Flagstick

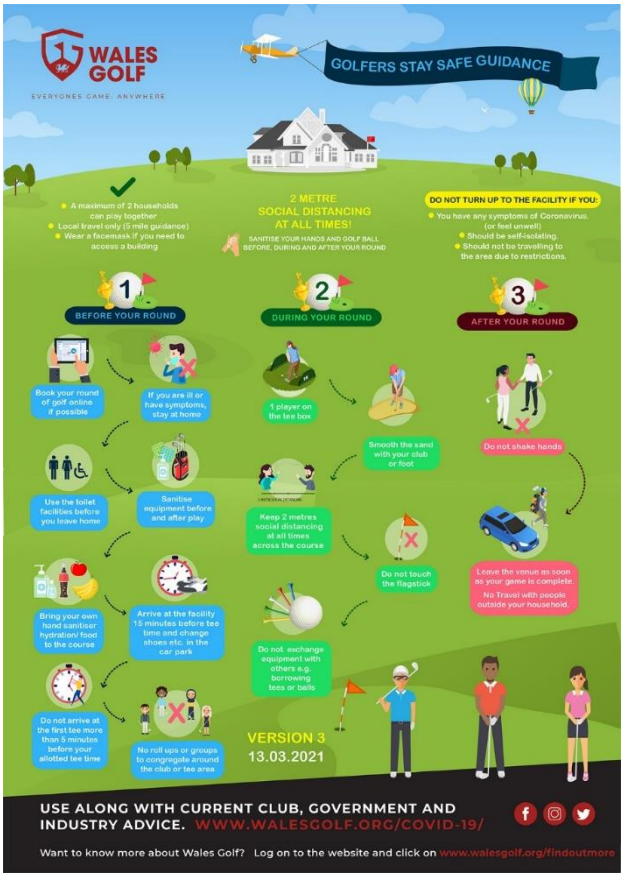
- Golfers are required to leave the flagstick in the hole at all times and not to touch it. It is a matter for the Committee to decide whether it establishes this policy by way of a Code of Conduct or Local Rule, and whether it provides a penalty under the Code of Conduct or for a breach of the Local Rule.
- As a temporary provision, flagsticks can be used for the purpose of player safety which do not meet the specifications in Part 8 of the Equipment Rules.

Hole and Holed

- The hole liner (sometimes referred to as the hole 'cup') is to be set in a way that means that all of the ball cannot be below the surface of the putting green, so the ball is considered holed if any part of it is below the surface of the putting green.
- To minimise the need to lift the ball from the hole, it is recommended that the Committee provides that a ball is holed with the next stroke if it is within 12 inches of the hole (which is just over the length of a standard putter grip) for casual play only. This does not prevent a player in match play conceding a stroke that is outside this length.
- The Committee may decide to have the hole liner sitting above the surface of the green and treat a ball as holed if it strikes the liner.

Competitions

Wales Golf guidance regarding club competition is available by clicking here.

Golfer Stay Safe General Guidance

Our updated golfer info-graphic accessed here